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Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voulé, submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 32/32.

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Summary

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association addresses the linkages between the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted to the Human Rights Council by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 32/32. This is the first thematic report of the Special Rapporteur to the General Assembly and his second thematic report since he took up his functions on 4 April 2018.

2. In the report, the Special Rapporteur seeks to stress and study the existing linkages between the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. In preparing the report, the Special Rapporteur gathered information from different stakeholders. He is particularly grateful for the inputs received within a very tight deadline from Member States, United Nation agencies, civil society organizations and national human rights institutions.

4. In view of the forthcoming theme of the high-level political forum in 2019 on the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness: peaceful and inclusive societies, human capital development and gender equality",[1] the Special Rapporteur considers that the present report is an initial contribution to the current international discussions on sustainable development and that it is timely and in line with the coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review nature of the Agenda.

II. Exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

5. By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, States re-established a new call for action to change the world with a transformative vision for development. The 2030 Agenda recognizes "the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions".

6. In moving beyond the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business, States included in the Agenda goals that are related to issues of civil and political rights, including the pledge to create more peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Goal 16). In particular, target 16.10 focuses on fundamental freedoms, which includes the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

7. The Special Rapporteur underlines that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are indivisible from other human rights. They are instrumental to achieve the full enjoyment of other human rights as they enable the exercise of a number of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda seek to realize the enjoyment of human rights for all by recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental and that equality, inclusiveness and non-discrimination are achieved through participation.

8. The exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are essential for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in every

[1] See A/70/684.

State. Democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law are pillars on which the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are built and can flourish to achieve sustainable development. The rights of freedoms of peaceful assembly and of association enable people to communicate, mobilize, organize and connect, favouring solidarity and partnerships and contributing to shaping public opinion and decision-making, thus constituting real drivers of change.

9. These rights ensure that people have a voice and are able to organize collectively around shared interests. Their action in the social domain is particularly important because they help to tackle the barriers of exclusion, a key objective of the 2030 Agenda.

10. The Agenda acknowledges the prominent role that civil society plays in its implementation. Civil society's effective action and impact is concomitant to the enjoyment of the rights of freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, which makes it possible to open spaces for empowerment, participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability.

11. This approach is consistent with the view of the Special Rapporteur, who has stressed that civil society is an essential actor in fostering sustainable development,[2] and with the 2030 Agenda, which presents itself as "of the people, by the people and for the people". In this respect, the success of the implementation of the Agenda is dependent on the space available to civil society for its voice to be heard without fear and interference.

III. Exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association for the realization of the 2030 Agenda

12. In this section, the Special Rapporteur explores five areas where the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association is crucial in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

A. Enabling environment for civil society as a prerequisite for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda goals

13. The 2030 Agenda envisions a key role for civil society in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Civil society is both a means to ensuring social participation in its implementation and the beneficiary of the promise of the Goals "to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources".

14. The exercise of the rights of freedom of peaceful assembly and of association contributes to the strengthening of an inclusive and effective system of checks and balances inherent to democracy and essential for societies in which power is held to account. The guaranteed enjoyment of these rights constitutes a precondition for the active participation of individuals and civil society actors in decision-making at all levels of government, which is particularly relevant to the ability of civil society to engage in implementing Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. Under the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, when examining and comparing the treatment between (non-profit) associations and businesses, five areas were

[2] See A/69/635; A/HRC/35/28 and A/HRC/72/135.

identified as essential to build an enabling environment for associations: (a) entry procedures and dissolution processes; (b) the regulation of operations; (c) access to resources; (d) political influence and access to power; and (e) conducting peaceful assemblies.[3] These areas are equally relevant in the context of the 2030 Agenda and remain important in achieving all goals and targets.

16. The overall conditions for civil society participation and action are considered as enabling when the environment, composed of legal norms and practices, respects the fundamental freedoms to peaceful assembly, association, expression and the protection of human rights defenders.[4]

17. The use of public space, participation in public debate and the possibility of organizing associations all contribute to enabling civic space within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, which provides for peaceful, inclusive and just societies with effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

18. This entails the rights of individuals to organize in groups or form associations, to be free to decide on their internal governance in a way that would help them most effectively to reach their mission and, where needed, also to engage their constituencies without fear of repercussion.

19. Freedom of peaceful assembly should also be guaranteed, as peaceful assemblies play a vibrant role in mobilizing the population and formulating grievances and aspirations, facilitating the celebration of events and, importantly, influencing public policy.[5] This remains relevant when looking into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

20. The mobilization of financial resources is mentioned throughout the Agenda and in specific Goals and targets. This includes access to resources for civil society organizations, which should be able to raise sufficient funds to operate and engage meaningfully in participatory national, regional and international processes. In that regard, an enabling legal framework should make it possible to have access to domestic and/or foreign funding without prior authorization and without formal constraints being imposed on the process, with the possibility of tax-benefits and raising funds from the public without administrative burdens.

21. In implementing the 2030 Agenda, the Special Rapporteur strongly believes that an important component for creating an enabling environment is recognizing the intrinsic value of civil society and creating meaningful and institutionalized spaces where their diverse and pluralistic voices can be heard and valued in contributing to the achievement of all of the Goals.

22. In sum, an enabling environment for civil society contributes to democracy and to development in equal measure, and development is interlinked with the realization of human rights in a way that the enjoyment of such rights supports the achievement of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

B. Participation and inclusiveness in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

23. The elimination of discrimination is important for the achievement of full participation and inclusiveness in the 2030 Agenda process, particularly because of

[3] See A/70/266.
[4] See A/HRC/27/29.
[5] See A/HRC/20/27.

the pledges to "leave no one behind". This evokes the participation of all stakeholders and all people of all countries.

24. The pledge also evokes a fundamental human rights norm: that of participation in decision-making, in which stakeholders are recognized as having a right to participate meaningfully in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies that affect them.[6]

25. Similarly, article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights protects every individual's right, without distinction or unreasonable restriction, to, inter alia, take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives. The Human Rights Committee recognizes that the full enjoyment of those rights depends on the free communication of information and ideas about public and political issues between citizens and their representatives, and that this requires the free exercise of the rights to peaceful assembly and of association among other rights.[7]

26. The right to participate in the conduct of public affairs is a broad concept that aims at people being fully involved in and able to effectively influence public decision-making processes that affect them. Rights regarding public participation envisage consultation at each phase of the legislative drafting and policymaking processes, as well as the ability and space to voice criticism and to submit proposals aimed at improving the functioning and inclusivity of all governmental bodies engaged in the conduct of public affairs.[8]

27. The possibility to organize or join peaceful assemblies and to form or join associations is crucial to empower and mobilize people around an issue, to formulate grievances and aspirations and to influence public policy decisions. In other words, those rights are crucial for effective public participation.

28. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes the need for clear and consistent rules of engagement for effective civil society participation in the framework of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The availability of resources to facilitate such participation and the inclusion of a wide range of civic actors, including social movements, and a wide range of interventions, including protests and demonstrations, is essential to create an inclusive atmosphere that leaves no voice unheard.

29. The principles to which States committed themselves in the 2030 Agenda significantly overlap with human rights norms. For example, the commitment to "leave no one behind" and Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, as well as Goal 10, aimed at reducing inequality within and between countries, reflect the human rights principle of non-discrimination and equality.

30. Dismantling discrimination means addressing structural root causes that keep people in poverty and marginalize or exclude them through laws, policies and social practices, to which human rights technical cooperation and capacity-building can contribute.[9] The intention to focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind corresponds to a focus on substantive discrimination, which recognizes that groups of individuals may suffer historical or persistent prejudice and that States are

[6] See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 18 (2005) on the right to work, para. 42.

[7] See Human Rights Committee general comment No. 25 (1996) on participation in public affairs and the right to vote.

[8] See A/HRC/27/29, para. 21.

[9] See A/HRC/38/28, para. 32.

obliged in some cases to adopt special measures to eliminate these conditions that perpetuate discrimination.[10]

31. The Special Rapporteur highlights that, in the national follow-up and progress review processes, broad consultation should be led by States by reaching out and considering a wide range of multi-stakeholder actors, including civil society representatives at the grass-roots level, for its effective participation.

32. The Special Rapporteur recognizes that national human rights institutions also play an important role in coordinating the participation of a large number of stakeholders, as they are uniquely placed to play a bridging role between different types of stakeholders, including Governments, civil society, development partners, businesses, United Nations agencies, etc. as reaffirmed in the Merida Declaration, adopted by such institutions, which is grounded on the understanding of human rights and the 2030 Agenda as mutually reinforcing frameworks.[11]

33. By exercising the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the key actors in the 2030 Agenda are allowed greater participation and inclusiveness, including through the empowerment of the most marginalized, underrepresented and vulnerable individuals, groups and populations.

C. Transparency and accountability as key components of the 2030 Agenda

34. Primary responsibility for the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda is vested in Governments, to be undertaken at the national, regional and global levels, with the high-level political forum holding the central role at the global level (see para. 47 of the Agenda). The follow-up and review processes should promote accountability and will be guided by a number of principles, including inclusiveness, participation, transparency, a people-centred approach, gender-sensitivity, respect for human rights and a focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind (ibid., para. 74 (d)–(e)). The follow-up and review processes are also voluntary and country-led (Ibid., para 74 (a)) and to that end countries submit voluntary national reports in line with annual thematic priorities identified by the high-level political forum.

35. One of the shortcomings identified in the Millennium Development Goals was weak accountability, due to a lack of clear responsibilities among the actors. That meant that the beneficiaries of the achievement of those Goals could not meaningfully engage in shaping decisions, and there were no significant consequences for not achieving the predominantly aspirational goals. In addition, it was difficult to hold industrialized countries accountable for the commitments they had made to the global partnership for development and for the transnational human rights impact of their development, aid, trade and investment policies.[12]

36. Accountability entails responsibility for specific results. From a human rights-based perspective, those specific results emanate from human rights entitlements and corresponding obligations. Rights-holders need to be able to demand and monitor the implementation of programmes for the desired results. Here too, the ability to

[10] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 20 paras. 8–9.

[11] Available at https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/ICC/InternationalConference/12IC/Background%20Information/Merida%20Declaration%20FINAL.pdf.

[12] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Center for Economic and Social Rights, *Who will be accountable? Human rights and the post-2015 development agenda* (New York and Geneva, 2013), available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/WhoWillBeAccountable.pdf.

mobilize through the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association is important. The accountability arrangements of the 2030 Agenda fall short of being binding, human rights standards as they are voluntary and Government-led. Nevertheless, the high-level political forum has been mandated by Member States to build on existing reviews and reporting mechanisms, including reports and recommendations from the Human Rights Council, its mechanisms and subsidiary bodies.

37. The Special Rapporteur believes that participatory review processes at the national level, at which civil society plays an integral role, bolster transparency and accountability for results and, consequently, the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association enables civil society to contribute effectively to an open monitoring of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

38. One good example of how Governments can empower people and promote civil society participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is the Escazú Agreement on access to information, public participation and justice in environmental matters, adopted in March 2018 by 24 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Agreement develops Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which stated that the best way to deal with environmental matters was though the effective participation of all people. The Agreement is also the first binding instrument to offer a specific regimen of protection for environmental human rights defenders and their organizations. While the Agreement promotes citizen participation, the negotiating process also saw the public participate directly by way of electing representatives from the public to have a seat at the negotiating table and present proposals to delegates.[13]

39. Participatory budget programmes in Jordan, organized by the non-profit organization Partners-Jordan, are another example of collaborative endeavours that enable communities, civil society organizations and local governments to engage in local governance. The programmes have resulted in the reallocation of funds to the priority areas identified by citizens and have enabled citizens to hold their municipal governments accountable if services are not implemented.[14] The programmes promote civic participation and accountability of government institutions, in line with the achievement of Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

40. The call for indicators and disaggregated statistical data to monitor progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is important for accountability purposes. Some countries, such as Kenya, Nepal, the Philippines, Samoa and Zimbabwe, have already flagged challenges related to inadequate disaggregated data.[15] There is a need for collaborative, creative, innovative, efficient and cost-effective approaches to monitoring and data collection. Having multiple sources of such data collection and monitoring, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), not only helps to fill in data gaps from among otherwise excluded groups, but also contributes to the relevance and disaggregation of data, empowers rights-holders and vulnerable groups and helps to resolve privacy concerns.[16]

41. The Special Rapporteur recognizes the role that national human rights institutions can play as monitoring and accountability institutions. He notes that the Merida Declaration encourages such institutions to collaborate in mutual capacity-building and sharing of experiences to contribute to a human rights-based approach

[13] Submission by the Civic Space Initiative, July 2018.

[14] Submission by the Community of Democracies, July 2018.

[15] See Voluntary National reports at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/.

[16] Danish Institute for Human Rights, *Human rights and data: Tools and resources for sustainable development* (Copenhagen, 2017), p. 39, available at: www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/dokumenter/udgivelser/sdg/data_report_2016.pdf.

to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Such institutions can play a number of roles, for example: to promote transparent and inclusive participation and consultation; to monitor the progress of strategies in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; to engage with and hold Governments to account for poor or uneven progress through their reporting to parliaments, the general public and national, regional and international mechanisms; and to facilitate access to justice, redress and remedy for those who experience abuse or violation of their rights through various justice mechanisms.[17]

42. From the Special Rapporteur's perspective, the central principles of the 2030 Agenda, as discussed above, rely significantly on civil society engagement. Civil society already plays a significant role in human rights monitoring, as well as in reporting to the various international and regional human rights mechanisms, supporting country visits, raising awareness of particular situations, delivering statements, presenting alternative reports, etc.

43. Similarly, civil society is engaged in monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals in various ways, for example by participating in the preparation of the voluntary national review reports. A number of countries, including Botswana, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Germany, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Poland, organized consultations with a variety of stakeholders in preparing their reports, including non-profit associations, international NGOs, United Nations agencies, development partners, academia and the private sector.

44. Similarly, a number of Governments, such as those of Albania, Hungary, Jamaica, Lebanon, Mali, Mexico and Slovakia (see E/HLPF/2018/5), as well as Botswana, Brazil, Finland, Indonesia and Thailand, have established multi-stakeholder committees that include key government institutions, the business community, civil society, academia and international organizations, including United Nations agencies, to provide leadership and coordination for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

45. Other countries, such as Afghanistan, Bahamas and Colombia, have expressed a commitment to formalizing their engagement with stakeholders such as civil society in their implementation efforts. In countries such as Australia and Malta (see E/HLPF/2018/5), as well as Azerbaijan, Chile and Cyprus, civil society is engaged in raising awareness around the Sustainable Development Goals, forming partnerships and addressing the risks and opportunities inherent in the 2030 Agenda. In Botswana, civil society has translated the Goals into the local language, while the Government of France has involved civil society and other stakeholders, on the understanding that deepening democracy is one of the best responses to the rise of all forms of radicalism and exclusion.

46. The enabling character of such rights foster groups and individuals to play their role as contributors to and watchdogs of the implementation of the Goals.

D. Partnerships with civil society

47. The 2030 Agenda places great emphasis on there being a global partnership working in the spirit of global solidarity. In so doing, it recognizes that it is not feasible for States to successfully implement the Agenda without joint collaboration with other stakeholders.

48. In the Special Rapporteur's view, a thriving civil society that is able to exercise the rights to assemble and associate freely plays a crucial role within that partnership.

[17] Ibid., p. 51.

considering its contributions to sustainable development. Those contributions include: producing and analysing data; reviewing and shaping development policies based on their technical expertise; ensuring that the voices of marginalized and vulnerable populations are taken into account; providing access to remote locations and underserved populations; shedding light on ignored or underserved goals and pushing for action; and raising awareness and bringing stakeholders together to tackle development challenges, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. The Gheskio Center, an NGO in Haiti that provides primary health-care services as well as research and training, is an example of a civil society organization that works in close collaboration with the Government to develop a sustainable health system in a country that is plagued by humanitarian health crises associated with natural disasters. The collaboration resulted in a 50 per cent decrease in infant mortality by the mid-1990s and, more recently, reduced the rate of HIV transmission from mother to child to less than 5 per cent as at 2009.[18] The partnership has seen improvements in people's overall health and responded to Goals 3 and 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, related to good health and well-being and infrastructure development through training and education tools, respectively.

50. In Thailand, the Government has partnered with civil society to design the methodology and processes for prioritizing the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals taking into account the local context. It has also established a social enterprise in every province that promotes and strengthens the work of social enterprises, civil society organizations and volunteers. A range of stakeholders, including the private and public sectors, academia, civil society and community members, works together to build the community's economy and sustainable well-being of the people.

51. The Special Rapporteur notes the value of some spaces, such as the Global Deal platform, a multi-stakeholder partnership that brings together Governments, businesses and employers' organizations, trade unions, international organizations and associations representing civil society, around the shared objective of developing and harnessing the potential of social dialogue and sound industrial relations as instruments for promoting quality work in line with Goal 8, on decent work and economic growth, and for fostering greater equality and more inclusive growth in line with Goal 10, on reduced inequalities.

52. As a concrete operational tool to the 2030 Agenda, the partnership launched a report [19] that asserts that enhanced social dialogue can create "win-win-win" opportunities in which more inclusive labour markets and economic growth lead to better socioeconomic outcomes and greater well-being for workers, improved performance for businesses and restored trust for Governments.

53. Another example of partnerships is the Open Government Partnership, which offers an opportunity for formal engagement between civil society, Governments and other key stakeholders on the process of implementing the Goals. In addition to principles such as transparency, civic participation, accountable public institutions and technological innovation shared by the 2030 Agenda, the Partnership aims to secure concrete commitments from Governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.[20] At the domestic level, the Partnership can provide a valuable example on how to secure the engagement of civil society in work related to the Sustainable Development Goals. It provides a platform for civil society and Governments to work together to

[18] Submission of the Community of Democracies, July 2018.

[19] Available at www.theglobaldeal.com/app/uploads/2018/05/GLOBAL-DEAL-FLAGSHIP-REPORT-2018.pdf.

[20] www.opengovpartnership.org/about/about-ogp.

create, implement and monitor country commitments in numerous development areas, such as the environment, health and gender. Such commitments typically involve boosting citizens' access to information and decision-making in these areas, as well as non-discriminatory access to relevant public goods and services.

54. Within this framework, in 2017, Slovakia adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of the Goals, including the participation of relevant actors such as NGOs and civil society. With the participation of civil society, a series of national priorities for implementing the 2030 Agenda was adopted one year later. Those priorities will serve as a basis for a national development strategy for the period to 2030, which is expected to be adopted by the second quarter of 2019. The development process of the strategy follows the participative process already established during the development phase of national priorities, with the active engagement and cooperation of NGOs and civil society actors, as well as the public.

55. Partnerships with the private sector have been given a prominent role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This must be premised on the protection of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and corporate accountability, based on the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Organization for Economic cooperation and Development Guidance on Due Diligence for Responsible Business Conduct [21] and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.[22]

56. Regarding the establishment of partnerships, the Special Rapporteur wishes to echo the need to broaden the frame of focus when considering the key actors with whom to engage, while ensuring that fundamental freedoms are protected and consolidated. For example, in Slovakia and Switzerland, among other countries, there is an effort to involve parliament more closely in the 2030 Agenda processes. In Greece, the intention is to engage the Hellenic Parliament in the overall follow-up and review processes of the implementation of the Goals. In Mali, a parliamentary committee was established to monitor and evaluate the Goals.

57. Furthermore, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has begun to look at the role of local government and municipal authorities as key actors in many countries in facilitating and enabling rights at a practical level, but which are often ignored during the development of training and capacity-building programmes, when the focus is instead on the Government and on the police. In that regard, the Special Rapporteur considers that local government and municipalities should be given more consideration when developing democratic capacity and could be a key factor in promoting and enabling the work on implementing the 2030 Agenda (Goal 17), including the local civil society representatives that work with them.

E. Supporting labour rights in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

58. In the labour sphere, the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association is equally critical for the achievement of all of the Sustainable Development Goals, as it permits workers and employers to form and join unions and enter into dialogue and negotiations not only at the workplace but also when it comes to development policies that foster equitable social and economic progress and inclusivity.[23]

[21] www.oecd.org/investment/due-diligence-guidance-for-responsible-business-conduct.htm.

[22] www.ilo.org/empent/areas/mne-declaration/lang--en/index.htm.

[23] Submission of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

59. ILO, as the only global tripartite institution, plays a unique role in setting standards on fundamental principles and rights at work. The core ILO conventions include the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87), which calls on States to prevent discrimination against trade unions, protect employers' and workers' organizations against mutual interference, and promote collective bargaining; and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), which protects workers who are exercising their right to organize, upholds the principle of non-interference between workers' and employers' organizations and promotes voluntary collective bargaining. Those foundational rights are essential to the protection of other core labour rights. States that are members of ILO are obliged to respect the principles of freedom of association, whether or not they have ratified the appropriate conventions.[24]

60. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights both explicitly protect the right to form and join trade unions. International human rights law also imposes upon States a duty to actively promote, encourage and facilitate the enjoyment of fundamental rights, including labour rights.[25] Furthermore, the notion that States should promote trade unionism among workers is implicit in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. States must take measures to ensure that third parties do not interfere with union rights.[26]

61. In the world of work, freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining go hand in hand. Both are fundamental principles and rights at work which, in accordance with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, requires Member States to respect, promote and realize these rights, irrespective of region, level of economic development or whether they have ratified the relevant conventions.[27]

62. These rights and social dialogue are closely related to the pledges made in the 2030 Agenda that aim to create the conditions necessary for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work. They are also important for building dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centred economies, and are pillars in building and fortifying democratic processes, which are in turn the cornerstone of sustainable development.

63. According to ILO, social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation and information-sharing among representatives of Governments, social partners or between social partners on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.[28]

64. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, the link between the exercise of these rights, social dialogue and the contribution of trade unions to the decision-making processes can have far-reaching implications on consensus-building and social cohesion, facilitating effective policy implementation, fostering socioeconomic progress and constituting a governance instrument for sustainable development, representing a key means of implementing the 2030 Agenda.

65. In that regard, the Trade Union Development Cooperation Network of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has conducted three case studies in Ghana, Uruguay and Indonesia, demonstrating the important contributions workers

[24] See A/71/385, para. 57.
[25] See A/70/266, para. 4.
[26] See A/71/385, para. 55.
[27] Submission of the International Labour Office, July 2018.
[28] International Labour Office (ILO), "Social Dialogue", available at www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/download/brochure.pdf.

can make to sustainable development where their rights are guaranteed in an enabling environment.[29]

66. The Ghana case study puts forward the role of institutionalized social dialogue in increasing minimum wages and highlights the way that other forms of social dialogue, including consultations and discussions with trade unions, have contributed to the elaboration of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and national policies on employment, young people and social protection. In Uruguay, the study emphasizes the opening of space to implement structural reforms dealing with social policy (social protection and social security coverage) and economic policy (raising of wages) through social dialogue, resulting in reductions in poverty and inequality levels. In the case of Indonesia, the role of social dialogue is focused on the reform of social security laws to cover the whole population, including workers in the informal economy. It describes the importance of social dialogue for the formulation of the two ILO Decent Work Country Programmes, but also touches upon the contribution of social dialogue to minimum wage increases prior to the regressive reforms undertaken in late 2015.

67. All of the above case studies relate to the achievement of Goal 1, on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls; Goal 8, on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; Goal 10, on reducing inequality within and among countries; and Goal 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

68. The right to freedom of association constitutes a prerequisite to the full development of free collective bargaining, which can lead to important positive outcomes in relation to inequality, poverty reduction and social and economic progress. The exercise of these fundamental rights depends on the existence of an enabling environment where trade unions can participate through social dialogue in decision-making processes with respect to socioeconomic development questions.

IV. Challenges faced by civil society actors in contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

69. The closing of civic space is characterized by States increasingly placing restrictions on civil society, impeding the rights of individuals and groups to exercise freely their rights to peaceful assembly, free association and open self-expression. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur has over the years documented numerous ways in which those rights have been impeded by State as well as non-State actors.

70. In his most recent report,[30] the Special Rapporteur identified eight global trends with regard to restrictions in the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, namely: (a) the use of legislation to suppress the legitimate exercise of freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; (b) the criminalization of and indiscriminate and excessive use of force to counter or repress peaceful protest; (c) the repression of social movements; (d) the stigmatization of and attacks against civil society actors; (e) restrictions targeting particular groups; (f) limitations on rights during electoral periods; (g) the negative impact of rising populism and extremism; and (h) obstructions encountered in the digital space.

[29] See the full report at: https://www.ituc-csi.org/social-dialogue-development.

[30] A/HRC/38/34.

71. Those trends, together with measures aimed at restricting or silencing the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, undermine the empowerment of people and their rights to express themselves and to engage in collective activities — political, economic, social, cultural or environmental — which are at the core of all Agenda commitments.

72. Given the significant impact that civil society has on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, a commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda should effectively translate into a commitment to expand and maintain civic space. Unfortunately, the space for civic engagement has been closing in many countries around the world in both authoritarian regimes as well as democratic countries. Those restrictions hinder civil society's ability to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda.

73. Some of the impacts of restricted civic engagement might include:[31]

(a) Diminished service provision, affecting the livelihoods of many who depend on services and aid provided by civil society organizations;

(b) Increased risk of conflict, due to heightened tensions from unaddressed grievances and demands from individuals who are unable to channel them appropriately;

(c) Missed economic opportunities in terms of lost revenue from income and other taxes, job losses and slowdown in sectors and industries that provide services and goods;

(d) Corruption and inefficient allocation of resources stemming from a decrease in monitoring and accountability demands by civil society.

74. In their voluntary national reports on the 2030 Agenda, a number of Governments identified challenges related to the inclusion of civil society in implementation processes. For example, Canada noted the exclusion of marginalized communities from the 2030 Agenda processes. Mexico recognized the challenge of institutionalizing mechanisms for participation and the joint creation of public policies, and proposed as a solution the formalization of mechanisms for civil society participation. Bangladesh stated it was working out how to enhance the participation of all stakeholders in its efforts to implement the Goals. It further identified resource mobilization as a challenge that could be addressed by developing innovative ways of financing, from both the public and private sectors, development partners, and by ensuring effective and efficient ways for resource utilization. El Salvador sought to ensure the effective participation of other actors and levels of government in the implementation of the Agenda and to mobilize domestic and international financial resources for the cause.

75. The impact of restrictive civic space on several pertinent themes is discussed in the sections below.

A. Development and humanitarian work

76. The work of development and humanitarian civil society organizations in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be overstated. These organizations are engaged in providing services and aid aimed at promoting a majority of the Goals, directly or indirectly, principally including: ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (Goal 1); ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture (Goal 2); ensuring healthy lives and

[31] Submission of the Community of Democracies, July 2018.

promoting well-being for all at all ages (Goal 3); ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (Goal 4); achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (Goal 5); and ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Goal 6).

77. Those Goals are closely linked to economic and social rights, and many of the targets correspond to elements of specific rights in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.[32] Development and humanitarian organizations working on these issues are therefore supporting States in the fulfilment of their obligations under these rights.

78. States further committed, in the 2030 Agenda, to take effective measures and actions in conformity with international law, to remove obstacles and constraints, and to strengthen support for and meet the special needs of people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism.

79. However, four common challenges to creating an enabling environment for development civil society organizations can be identified as follows:[33]

(a) Burdensome legal and administrative requirements that narrow the scope of permissible development activities, impose excessive reporting or renewal requirements and in general make it difficult for civil society organizations to fulfil their mandates;

(b) Restrictions on foreign funding and affiliations, with devastating effects on many development civil society organizations whose existence depends on access to foreign resources;

(c) Counterterrorism legislation and policies that prevent the transfer of funds to or any connections or affiliations with terrorist organizations, which has a debilitating effect on the work of development civil society organizations working in high-risk areas or where extremist groups are present due to the likelihood of contact (even inadvertently) with such groups;

(d) Vilification, distrust and violence, resulting in a relationship between Government and civil society that is antagonistic, often resulting in lack of collaboration, inefficient allocation of resources and miscommunication. Attacks on activists deter civil society organizations from working in difficult and yet essential areas out of concern for the safety of their staff.

80. The Special Rapporteur notes the impact of restrictions placed on development and humanitarian organization, not only on the organizations and staff, but also in particular on those most in need of services and assistance. He warns of the deleterious effect this may have on efforts to reach those furthest behind and those hardest to reach.

B. Vulnerable groups and the pledge to leave no one behind

81. The 2030 Agenda recognizes the imperative of empowering people who are vulnerable, including all children, young people, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants. The obstacles that vulnerable and groups at risk face

[32] See C. Golay "No one will be left behind: the role of United Nations Human Rights Mechanism in monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals that seek to realize economic social and cultural rights" (Geneva, 2018), pp. 28–34, available at www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Briefing11-interactif-HD.pdf.

[33] Submission of the Civic Space Initiative, July 2018.

include challenges to the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.[34]

82. These challenges include laws and policies that contain explicitly discriminatory provisions that have a negative impact on these groups, and practices that threaten or impede the enjoyment of rights.

83. The Special Rapporteur is concerned about impediments to the achievement of Goal 3, as well as the right to the highest attainable standard of health, caused by restrictions imposed on civil society organizations working with people living with HIV/AIDS. For example, in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, such organizations have to contend with the criminalization of, discrimination against and marginalization of key populations within the groups they serve. Organizations in Ethiopia and Uganda face difficulties opening bank accounts, holding public gatherings and even posting signs over their front doors. They are tied down by onerous bureaucratic requirements and legal cases challenging their right to exist, expending energy and resources that could be directed towards uplifting the status of the people at risk.[35]

84. In the context of Goal 5, on the equality of women and girls, the principle of "ensuring that no one is left behind" requires both substantive and formal equality, non-discrimination and empowerment of women, as enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders working on a variety of issues, often face threats, harassment and violence as they challenge traditional norms on the place of women in society and as they exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. Attacks may also come in the form of smear campaigns, physical and sexual assaults, for example during peaceful assemblies, and even killings, such as that of Berta Caceres, a Honduran woman environmental activist and indigenous leader. Women human rights defenders may also be subject to travel, funding and security restrictions, preventing them from engaging in global spaces, such as meetings of the Human Rights Council. The global rise of authoritarianism, fundamentalist and extremist ideologies similarly constrain the space of women and girls. The intersections of gender and other parameters of marginalization, such as ethnicity and race, produce additional impediments to the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

C. Workers' rights

85. Restrictions to the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association have a deleterious impact on several goals affecting the rights of workers.

86. Goal 8 is the most comprehensive goal applicable to the right to work, with targets that cover, among other things: promoting polices that support decent job creation (8.3); achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all and equal pay for work of equal value (8.5); reducing substantially the proportion of young people not in employment (8.6); protecting labour rights and promoting safe and secure working environments for all workers (8.8); devising and implementing policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs (8.9); and developing and operationalizing a global strategy for youth employment.. (8.b). In addition, a number of the other Goals have a broader relevance to the right to work.[36]

[34] See A/HRC/26/25, para. 23.

[35] ICNL 'Reinforcing Marginalization: The Impact of Closing Civic Space on HIV Response in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda' www.icnl.org/programs/africa/ICNL-Reinforcing-Marginalization.pdf.

[36] See A/HRC/37/32, paras. 11–12.

87. Despite the crucial role that trade unions play in protecting labour rights through social dialogue in decision-making processes, they are not mentioned in the Goals. The right to collective bargaining and the right to strike are also not mentioned. Nevertheless, an enabling civic environment — and in particular the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association — are essential tools to strengthen the protection of workers' rights. The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are key to the realization of democracy and dignity, since they enable people to voice and represent their interests, to hold Governments to account and to empower human agency. Those rights are a means to level the unequal relationship between workers and employers, thereby helping workers to correct abuses and to gain access to fair wages, safe working conditions and a collective voice.[37] To achieve the Goals and ensure that no one is left behind, States must guarantee the conditions necessary for workers to join and form trade unions. It is essential that trade unions are able to operate freely.[38] ILO has noted that the right to organize and bargain collectively provides an essential foundation for social dialogue, effective labour market governance and the realization of decent work.[39]

88. Nevertheless, workers face a number of challenges in securing the ability to exercise those rights.[40] These include burdensome registration requirements for trade unions, the exclusion of certain categories of workers from forming or joining trade unions, the criminalization of strikes and protests, threats and violence against trade unionists. Informal workers, domestic workers — and in many countries agricultural workers, contract workers and public-sector workers — are frequently excluded from the protection of labour laws and have little opportunity to assemble, form or join unions or to bargain for higher wages or better working conditions.[41]

89. Several targets around Goal 5, on gender equality, and Goal 8 focus on ensuring the full participation of and equal opportunities for women at all levels of decision-making, achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, and protecting labour rights and safe and secure work environments for all workers. Yet women trade union leaders are particularly targeted for assassination or subjected to gender-based violence, such as sexual abuse or rape, as well as threats of violence, thereby impeding their ability to exercise their rights to freedom of assembly and of association.

90. Similarly, low-income migrant workers face economically exploitative conditions of employment, social exclusion and political disenfranchisement. Migrant workers may be subjected to a rigid visa sponsorship regime that gives employers inordinate control over the workers ability to reside, work and even leave the country. They may suffer wage theft, confiscation of passports, harassment, intimidation and even violence, without access to justice and redress. Because migrant workers are often denied the freedom to assemble and associate owing to structural barriers in legal frameworks or their irregular status, they are thus unable to advocate to improve wages or working conditions.[42]

91. The Special Rapporteur notes with concern that the traditional tools for asserting labour rights have been weakened significantly across the globe. Decreasing unionization is fuelled in part by the changing nature of work but also by concerted efforts by employers to prevent the establishment of unions. The right to strike is

[37] See A/71/385, para. 16.
[38] See A/HRC/37/32, para. 56.
[39] ILO, "Fundamental principles and right at work: From challenges to opportunities" (Geneva, 2017), para. 12.
[40] Submission by Solidarity Center, July 2018.
[41] See A/71/385, para. 21.
[42] Ibid., paras. 28–29.

weakened by excluding certain categories of workers from the right, excessive prerequisites to hold a legal strike, inappropriate legal changes that allow public authorities to suspend or declare a strike illegal and government and public arguments favouring restrictions on the right to strike.[43] Without these tools, workers will be unable to engage in social dialogue and are denied an opportunity to participate in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

D. Sustainable management of the environment and natural resources

92. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur has previously dealt with the rights of freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the context of natural resource exploitation,[44] including some of the restrictions that environmental activists, indigenous peoples and organizations that work on environmental issues face to deter them from fulfilling their mandates. Although Governments are often the force behind the restrictions, companies involved in natural resource exploitation are often involved or complicit in the violations.

93. Some of the ways that space for environmental groups is restricted include:[45]

(a) Physical harassment and intimidation, and in many cases even killings, as retribution for opposition to the exploitation of natural resources;

(b) Criminalization of groups and their members, including through investigations, prosecutions, searches and the seizure of equipment and property, travel restrictions, arrests with high bail amounts, a lack of access to lawyers and in some cases imprisonment. Sometimes, civil society groups are served defamation or libel lawsuits for punitive amounts of compensation, often by the companies whose projects they oppose;

(c) Arbitrary denial of registration, burdensome registration requirements, arbitrary suspension and dissolution, and restrictions to foreign funding;

(d) Stigmatization and labelling, for example as communists, anti-development, anti-progress, unpatriotic or terrorists. This is a tactic that Governments and the media use to discredit activists in the eyes of the general public.

94. Of direct relevance to the role of civil society in supporting the 2030 Agenda is the stifling of dialogue through the closing of spaces where Government and civil society meet, or the crowding-out of legitimate civil society groups by organizations set up with the support of Governments or businesses, and aligned with their interests. Dialogue can also be subverted where adequate facilities, such as requisite information, are not made available to parties.

95. The stifling of civil society groups involved in natural resource governance poses difficulties for the achievement of Goals 13, 14 and 15, related to climate change and the sustainable management of the planets natural resources. In paragraph 33 of the 2030 Agenda, States made a commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and seas, freshwater resources, forests, mountains and dry lands and to the protection of biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife. States cannot achieve those

[43] Ibid., para. 67.

[44] See A/HRC/29/25.

[45] C. Terwindt and C. Schliemann, "Supporting civil society under pressure — lessons from natural resource exploitation", pp. 7–11, available at www.boell.de/sites/default/files/e-paper_democracy_-_shrinking_spaces_-_baf.pdf?dimension1=division_demo.

goals without engaging with indigenous and other communities that own or manage natural resources.

E. Fundamental freedoms, participation and accountability

96. The Special Rapporteur reiterates the legitimacy of peaceful protests and demonstrations as a means for civil society organizations to participate in decision-making and to hold State and non-State actors to account for their actions. Peaceful protests are typically a measure of last resort, when the scope for effective engagement with the authorities or businesses is otherwise limited.

97. The right to freedom of peaceful assembly is necessary for consultations to take place but, in numerous cases, social protests in the form of peaceful assemblies are met with violence, and the excessive use of force by the police as has been documented by civil society organizations in many countries. The need for prior authorization in order to hold such protests poses a problem, as the authorities can use that requirement as an opportunity to deny authorization or to impose burdensome prior conditions to the exercise of the right. Of particular concern is the use of private military and security companies to police and often suppress peaceful protests or other legitimate advocacy activities.[46]

98. The Special Rapporteur reiterates the importance of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly as a means to hold States accountable for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. He draws States' attention to the joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on the proper management of assemblies[47] that included a series of practical recommendations for the management of assemblies. He further refers them to the checklist companion publication to the report — an easy-to-use tool to determine which practical recommendations contained in the report are already in place at the domestic level and to help assess how well domestic and local authorities manage assemblies.

99. An emerging challenge[48] that civil society is grappling with in relation to the ability to exercise the right to freedom of peaceful assembly is the increasing privatization of public spaces in many urban locations as a result of processes of regeneration and commercialization. This reduces the locations at which peaceful protests and demonstrations can be held, as privately owned spaces may only be available for certain non-contentious activities.

100. Another challenge is inconsistency regarding access to online resources and social media when organizing and participating in public protests. The capacity to use communication technologies securely and privately is vital to the organization and conduct of assemblies. Any restrictions to online access or expression must be necessary and proportionate and applied by a body independent of any political, commercial or other unwarranted influences, and there should be adequate safeguards against abuse.[49] The practice of blocking communications — impeding the organization or publicizing of an assembly online — rarely satisfies the requirements of international human rights standards.

[46] See A/HRC/29/25, paras. 54–55.
[47] See A/HRC/31/66.
[48] Submission of Neil Jarman, July 2018.
[49] See A/HRC/17/27, para. 69.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

101. **The unobstructed exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association is crucial for the implementation of all the Sustainable Development Goals because it empowers people with the space to articulate their voices and with the ability to organize around shared interests.**

102. **In conclusion, the Special Rapporteur highlights the five areas below where the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association is crucial in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**

103. **Ensuring participation and inclusiveness. The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association empower the most marginalized, underrepresented and vulnerable individuals, groups and populations by mobilizing public opinion and political will, raising awareness of societal issues and challenges, enhancing participation in decision-making and bringing unique knowledge and experience to shape policies and strategies and build solutions. In essence, those rights give a voice to and allow the participation of the beneficiaries of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

104. **Creating an enabling environment for civil society. The exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association helps to create, strengthen and expand an enabling environment, at the national and international levels, through which all actors, including civil society, can contribute meaningfully to achieving all of the Goals and their targets, as well as the integrity of the process, by participating and expressing their views and shaping policies.**

105. **Ensuring transparency and accountability. The exercise of those rights promotes transparency by addressing inequality, corruption, governance failures and injustice, which impede the realization of the Goals. It also ensures the effective monitoring of compliance with States' pledges by holding institutions to account for the implementation of the Goals and targets.**

106. **Creating partnerships with civil society. Through the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, a "revitalized global partnership for Sustainable Development based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity" can be built within and across national boundaries to overcome the challenges to realizing the Goals and to bring together beneficiaries, Governments, private businesses, civil society, the United Nations and other actors.**

107. **Supporting labour rights. The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association also provide an essential foundation for social dialogue, effective labour market governance and the realization of decent work and other rights, through representation, negotiation, mobilization and dialogue.**

108. **In realizing the integrity and harmonious implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Special Rapporteur recommends that States:**

(a) **Increase the awareness of the Agenda and the engagement of all stakeholders, including civil society actors and beneficiaries, at the grass-roots level;**

(b) **Recognize the value of civil society engagement in accompanying the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as a key component of efforts to leave no one behind, and institutionalize their participation at the national level, including through workers' organizations;**

(c) Ensure that enabling legal, political, economic and social environments exist for civil society to operate freely, including by ensuring that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and other human rights are enjoyed by everyone, without discrimination;

(d) Avoid any restriction to civic space, as this has a negative impact on the reduction of poverty, inequality and insecurity, and generates an environment in which there is a heightened risk of social conflict, including violence;

(e) Abolish any criminalization of peaceful protest or other activities of civil society aimed denouncing and reducing inequality, discrimination and corruption and at promoting good governance, accountability and human rights, including for minority groups;

(f) Create multi-stakeholder platforms that include civil society and other relevant actors, to contribute to the planning, implementation and monitoring of the Goals and their targets, and provide a space to raise concerns regarding policies, restrictions, laws and other obstacles that may hinder the realization of the Goals, including civil society organizations' participation in their realization;

(g) Connect the follow-up and review processes for the implementation of the Goals to the implementation of the outcomes of human rights mechanisms and States' commitments during the universal periodic review, including the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, in order to promote coherence and generate an enabling environment for sustainable development;

(h) Lift restrictions that prevent national and international civil society groups from gaining access to the financial and human resources they need to carry out their work, and give due consideration to the report of the Special Rapporteur on the ability of associations to have access to financial resources;[50]

(i) Ensure access to information and transparency on matters relating to the implementation of the Goals, in order to allow the meaningful participation of all stakeholder;

(j) Ensure that national action plans to implement the Goals recognize the need to protect the rights to freedom of peaceful association and of assembly to enable the participation and mobilization of all stakeholders in the 2030 Agenda.

109. **The Special Rapporteur encourages civil society:**

(a) To strengthen the levels of awareness and understanding of the Agenda and share knowledge across all actors of civil society on the importance of engaging in its implementation and breaking the silos among different actors;

(b) To continue to advocate for the implementation of the integrity of the Agenda, shedding additional light on underserved Goals and pushing for government action where needed;

(c) To mentor and inspire young people and leaders to participate and engage in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

110. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that businesses:**

(a) Contribute to the creation of a safe and enable environment for civil society participation in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

[50] A/HRC/23/39.

(b) Help to mobilize resources that enable civil society to engage meaningfully in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Ensure that private security companies are not involved in the repression of social movements, in particular protests around mining and land exploitation.

111. **The Special Rapporteur encourages national human rights institutions, within the framework of the Merida Declaration, to continue to collaborate and contribute towards a human rights-based approach for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**

112. **The Special Rapporteur calls on United Nations agencies to contribute by helping States to create spaces at the institutional level for civil society representatives to engage in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to create such spaces within their own organizations and processes.**